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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: promoting full employment and decent work for all

Statement submitted by Christian Children's Fund, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.5/2008/1.

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Statement

1. NGOs endorsing this statement offer the following for consideration during the 46th session of the Commission on Social Development: to guarantee full employment and decent work for all, youth must have access to viable employment opportunities.

2. As Christian Children's Fund (CCF) promotes youth agency and raises the voice of youth as partners in development, youth from around the world repeatedly place unemployment high on the list of problems they would like to help solve. Youth request support to undertake vocational training and small business development and want to help themselves and others.

3. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), the world is facing a growing youth employment crisis.[1] Young people, ages 15-24, represent 41% of the world's unemployed.[2] Youth unemployment rates are 2-3 times[3] higher than those of adults.[4] The ILO found that "one out of every three youth in the world is either seeking but unable to find work, has given up the job search entirely or is working but still living below the US$2 a day poverty line."[5]

4. Young people often find themselves "at the back of the line" for jobs[6] and are unable to find jobs in the formal economy.[7] Youth "have to engage in some form of work in order to survive"[8] or are forced to migrate — from rural to urban areas, or to other countries — in search of work. While the informal economy may provide youth with a source of income, there has been a rise in the number of unemployed urban youth who are turning to prostitution, gangs, street crime, and armed conflict.[9]

5. A twenty-one year old in Afghanistan explains that the culture of violence after years of war leaves young people vulnerable to exploitation by political groups and that vocational training and meaningful work are protective factors against the temptation to leave the community to join warlords.

6. While many countries have made progress in providing basic education to children, many school systems are now faced with,[10] and ill-equipped for, the learning needs of youth. A challenge for many countries remains providing youth with access to secondary education, especially lower secondary school.[11] Of those youth who have access, they often do not receive an education that responds to their needs, it is of low quality, and it does not prepare them for employment or self-employment.

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1 ILO, *Global Employment Trends for Youth*, 2006. Foreword.
2 United Nations, *World Youth Report 2003: The Global Situation of Young People*, Youth Employment; 2004; 61.
3 World Bank, *World Development Report 2006: Equity and Development*. September 20, 2005.
4 Niall O'Higgins, International Labour Office, The Challenge of Youth Unemployment, 1997.
5 ILO, *Global Employment Trends for Youth*, 2006. Foreword.
6 United Nations, *World Youth Report 2003: The Global Situation of Young People*, Youth Employment; 2004; 62.
7 Ibid. 67-68.
8 Ibid. 67-68.
9 Ibid. 67-68.
10 World Bank, *World Development Report 2007: Development and the Next Generation*. September 16, 2006; 31.
11 Ibid.

7. Research has found that "low levels of youth unemployment can coexist with a weak youth labor market as a result of extended participation in education by a high proportion of the young population. Education and training policies are thus inextricably linked to patterns of unemployment."[12]

8. "For young people, jobs provide a source not only of income, but also of dignity and self-respect. Youth who enter the workforce with limited job prospects, underdeveloped skills and inadequate education face the highest risk of long-term unemployment, underemployment and low-wage employment throughout their working lives, making them more vulnerable to social exclusion. Furthermore, unemployment and inadequate employment among youth contribute to high levels of poverty." [13]

9. "Without the right foothold from which to start out right in the labor market, young people are less able to make choices that will improve their own job prospects and those of their future dependents. This, in turn, perpetuates the cycle of insufficient education, low-productivity employment and working poverty from one generation to the next." [14]

10. To address the needs of youth, targeted attention and programmes are necessary. These could include:

1. National and community-based programmes for youth on livelihoods and employment, including non-formal and vocational education.[15] Vocational training allows youth to access skilled employment. However, in order for vocational training programmes to be successful, they must be coupled with comprehensive market surveys, ensuring that there is a demand for the skill and that there are job opportunities in that field. For example, in the Kiambu District of Kenya, CCF supports over 1000 young people made vulnerable by HIV in their communities through vocational training. The vocational skills selected were chosen as a result of a local market survey that the youth themselves helped to conduct.

2. Vocational training should be linked to microfinance programmes, allowing trained youth to start a business, if they choose to do so. Another important option to ensure the success of vocational training programmes is linking such programmes to job placement or apprenticeship programmes.

3. Income generating activities for youth through microfinance and small enterprise training need to be promoted, as well as youth cooperatives that foster and support creative and innovative ideas. It is important to develop an entrepreneurship spirit in youth, in order for them to be generators of jobs, rather than only job seekers.

4. Young people need to be provided with opportunities to produce quality products that can be marketed on a larger scale, through improving youth access to credit facilities and coaching.

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[12] United Nations, *World Youth Report 2003: The Global Situation of Young People*, Youth Employment; 2004; 62.

[13] Ibid. 67-68.

[14] ILO, *Global Employment Trends for Youth*, 2006. Foreword.

[15] World Bank, *World Development Report 2007: Development and the Next Generation*, September 16, 2006; 209.

5. Young people need to be provided with opportunities to "learn through work" — which would allow youth to gain practical and transferable skills and allow employers to get to know the youth they may employ in the future.[16]

6. Young people need to be involved in the development and evaluation of youth-targeted education, skills, or employment programmes.

7. Youth capacities to organize themselves and advocate for their rights need to be strengthened and incorporated into formal or non-formal vocational education programmes so their voices can be heard and their needs and expectations fulfilled by Governments and society. They need to be seen not as a problem but as an important opportunity to enhance and promote changes to build a more inclusive, equitable, sustainable, democratic, and just world for all.

8. Youth forums and networking need to be promoted and/or strengthened so youth can build economic alliances and/or partnerships among themselves, learn from each other and join efforts to create innovative and/or alternative enterprises at national, regional, and global levels.

9. It is necessary to integrate life skills, health, family planning, STI prevention, and gender equity discussions and information into all community-based livelihood and employment programmes for older children and youth. Providing youth the knowledge and understanding about issues that affect them enables them to make more informed decisions on important topics.

10. Youth informal employability needs to be increased by developing their skills during primary education. Schools could come up with extra-curricular trainings in various skills to ensure that children who drop out can easily start a small enterprise to raise funds for further education or specialized skills training.

11. Economic resources and education opportunities for the poorest youth need to be facilitated, so that this sector of the youth population can be included in these important activities. Usually these opportunities are inaccessible to youth living in poverty.

12. Governments should adopt policies and initiatives to promote economic growth and job creation.[17] According to the ILO Director-General, "despite increased economic growth, the inability of economies to create enough decent and productive jobs is hitting the world's young especially hard."[18]

13. Increasing the employment intensity of economic growth, "especially in the rapidly expanding sectors of the economy. Governments can establish incentive structures that promote employment-intensive growth by directing investment to sectors that are more employment-intensive."[19]

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[16] United Nations, *World Youth Report 2003: The Global Situation of Young People*, Youth Employment; 2004; 67-68.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Statement by UN International Labor Organization (ILO) Director-General Juan Somavia. October 30, 2006.

[19] United Nations, *World Youth Report 2003: The Global Situation of Young People*, Youth Employment; 2004; 62.

Note: Statement endorsed by the following non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council: Citizens United for Rehabilitation of Errants, Elizabeth Seton Federation and Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur.